AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Amended) A method for operator selection, comprising:

initiating a dialog between a contact and a call handling system;

identifying a language variation spoken by the contact;

determining a skill level with respect to the language variation for each operator within a set of operators following the initiation of the dialog between the contact and the call handling system, the skill level for each operator within the set of operators being determined on a real time basis while each operator is engaged in a dialog with a contact that has been transferred to that operator;

selecting an operator whose skill level in the language variation is above a predetermined value; and

transferring the dialog with the contact to the operator.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining includes:

receiving a self rating from an operator regarding how difficult a dialog was with a contact who speaks the language variation; and

updating the skill level of the operator using the self rating.

3. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining includes:

defining a set of dialog key words indicating communication difficulties;

rating an operator based on how many of the key words the operator spoke in a dialog with a contact that speaks the language variation; and

updating the skill level of the operator using the rating.

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein determining includes:

measuring a time an operator spent engaged in a dialog with a contact who speaks the language variation;

counting the number of words spoken during the dialog with the contact who speaks the language variation;

rating the operator based on the time spent and number of words spoken; and

updating the skill level of the operator using the rating.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein selecting includes:

selecting an operator with a highest skill level in the language variation.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein selecting includes:

queuing the contact with a soon to be available operator with a highest skill level in the language variation.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein selecting includes:

selecting an operator whose second language is equal to the language variation of the contact.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein selecting includes:

selecting an operator whose cultural background is associated with the language variation of the contact.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating a report on all language variations spoken by contacts calling the call handling system.

10. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating a report on operator skill levels with respect to a predefined set of language variations.

11. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

generating a report on disparities between a number of contacts calling the call handling system and speaking a particular language variation and operators skilled in the particular language variation.

12. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein initiating includes:

initiating a dialog between the contact and an interactive voice response interface.

13. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the language variation is an accent variation.

14. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the language variation is a dialect variation.

15. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein identifying includes:

retrieving the contact's language variation from a contact database.

16. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein identifying includes:

generating a set of confidence scores indicating a likelihood that the contact speaks each language variation within a set of language variations;

generating an inverse distance weighted confidence score for each of the language variations using the confidence score and an inversely weighted distance between the contact and each language variation; and

associating a language variation with the contact if that language variation's inverse distance weighted confidence score is above a predetermined value.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein generating an inverse distance weighted confidence score includes:

selecting a first language as a first origin;

calculating the distance between the first origin and each other language variation;

normalizing these distances with respect to the first origin;

multiplying each normalized distance by its respective confidence score to generate a set of multiplied results;

totaling the multiplied results to yield an inverse-distance weighted confidence score for the first language variation;

selecting a second language variation as a second origin; and

repeating the selecting, calculating, normalizing, multiplying, and totaling for the second origin.

18. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein associating includes:

associating a language variation having a highest variation's inverse distance weighted confidence score with the contact.

19. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the distance is a physical distance.

20. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the distance is a virtual distance.

21. (Amended) A method for operator selection comprising:

initiating a dialog between a contact and a call handling system;

generating a set of confidence scores indicating a likelihood that the contact speaks each language variation within a set of language variations;

generating an inverse distance weighted confidence score for each of the language variations using the confidence score and an inversely weighted distance between the contact and each language variation;

associating a language variation with the contact if that language variation's inverse distance weighted confidence score is above a predetermined value;

determining a skill level with respect to the language variation associated with the contact for each operator within a set of operators following the initiation of the dialog between the contact and the call handling system, the skill level for each operator within the set of operators being determined on a real

time basis while each operator is engaged in a dialog with a contact that has been transferred to that operator;

selecting an operator whose skill level in the language variation associated with the contact is above a predetermined value; and

transferring the dialog with the contact to the operator.

22. (Amended) A computer-usable medium embodying computer program code for performing operator selection, comprising:

initiating a dialog between a contact and a call handling system;

identifying a language variation spoken by the contact;

determining a skill level with respect to the language variation for each operator within a set of operators following the initiation of the dialog between the contact and the call handling system, the skill level for each operator within the set of operators being determined on a real time basis while each operator is engaged in a dialog with a contact that has been transferred to that operator;

selecting an operator whose skill level in the language variation is above a predetermined value; and

transferring the dialog with the contact to the operator.

23. (Original) The medium of claim 22, wherein identifying includes:

generating a set of confidence scores indicating a likelihood that the contact speaks each language variation within a set of language variations;

generating an inverse distance weighted confidence score for each of the language variations using the confidence score and an inversely weighted distance between the contact and each language variation; and

associating a language variation with the contact if that language variation's inverse distance weighted confidence score is above a predetermined value.

24. (Amended) A system for operator selection comprising a:

means for initiating a dialog between a contact and a call handling system;

means for identifying a language variation spoken by the contact;

means for determining a skill level with respect to the language variation for each operator within a set of operators following the initiation of the dialog between the contact and the call handling system, the skill level for each operator within the set of operators being determined on a real time basis while each operator is engaged in a dialog with a contact that has been transferred to that operator;

means for selecting an operator whose skill level in the language variation is above a predetermined value; and

means for transferring the dialog with the contact to the operator.